

ened danger, led on in person a furious attack against the French, and drove them back beyond the ravine. General Girard, one of the most gallant and intelligent of Napoleon's officers, was killed in this attack at the head of his division, the majority of which shared his fate, so destructive was the Prussian charge. D'Erlon's corps from Frasnes at this juncture appeared on the field, but only to withdraw under orders from Ney.<sup>1</sup> Blucher now brought together masses of troops behind St. Amand, and Bonaparte determined to change his point of attack. His reserves, consisting principally of the Imperial Guard, which had been at first directed to advance upon St. Amand, were now ordered to co-operate in a general attack upon Ligny, which, after a most determined resistance, was taken by the French. While this contest was going on the French Guards, supported by the heavy cavalry, rushed up the heights in the rear of Ligny. Blucher's reserves of infantry having been moved to St. Amand, there remained no other means of resisting this attack than by the employment of cavalry. The Prussian Marshal accordingly placed himself at their head, and attempted with dogged but unavailing gallantry to repel the French. After an unsuccessful charge his cavalry was overpowered and dispersed in confusion. In retreating before the vigorous pursuit of the French cavalry Blucher's horse was struck by a cannon-shot, and he himself was thrown on the ground, the hostile cavalry passing over his prostrate body. In the confusion of the fray he was unnoticed, and was luckily recovered by his own cavalry. The

<sup>i</sup> The whole story of how D'Erlon's corps of some 20,000 men did not strike a blow at either Quatre Bras or Ligny, but were kept on the march first to join Ney, then to join Napoleon, and then, recalled by Ney, returning to rejoin Ney, should be read at length in *Dorsey Gardner*, p. 84. checked by the Prince d'Auvergne's *Waterloo*, p. 169. D'Erlon had been left, as it were, in reserve, but available for Ney. Ney had called him up in support, when an over-zealous *aide de camp*, misunderstanding Napoleon's order to Ney to make a diversion on the rear of the Prussians after seizing Quatre Bras (and so separating the Allies), took on himself to order D'Erlon to Ligny. The corps had just appeared at Ligny, to the surprise of Napoleon, who delayed his final attack on the Prussians to ascertain to which side the force belonged, when D'Erlon received orders from Ney to join him at Quatre Bras, where the corps arrived too late to be of use. When it is considered what this corps did at Waterloo, where it formed the mass of the right wing, it is evident that its intervention at either of the two battles of the 16th June would have been effectual in crushing either foe, and so separating the Prussians and English.